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THE FREUDIAN METHODS APPLIED TO ANGER

By G. STANLEY HALL¹

The exact sciences consist of a body of truth which all accept, and to which all experts strive to contribute. Philosophy, however, like religion, has always been broken into sects, schools or parties, and the body of truth which all accept in these fields is relatively far less, and the antagonistic views far greater. Normal psychology, which a few decades ago started out to be scientific with the good old ideal of a body of truth *semper ubique et ad omnibus*, is already splitting into introspectionistic, behavioristic, genetic, philosophical and other groups, while in the new Freudian movement, Adler and Jung are becoming sectaries, the former drawing upon himself the most impolitic and almost vituperative condemnation of the father of psychoanalysis. With this latter schism we are not here concerned, but we are deeply concerned with the more general relations between the psychologists of the normal and those of the abnormal. With a very few negligible exceptions psychoanalysis has never had a place on the program of our American Psychological Association, and the normal has had little representation in your meetings and publications. This I deem unfortunate for both, for unsatisfactory as this sadly needed *rapprochement* is on the continent, it is far more so here. That the normalists in this country so persistently ignore the unique opportunity to extend their purview into the psychopathological domain at the unique psychological moment that the development of Freudianism has offered, is to me a matter of sad disappointment and almost depression. In reading a plea for Freud in our association of normalists, I am a *vox clamantis in deserto* and can evoke no response, and even the incursions of psychoanalysis into the domain of biography, myth, religion and dreams, have not evoked a single attempt at appreciation or criticism worthy of mention by any American psychologist of the normal. I have sought in various

¹ Read at a meeting of the American Psychoanalytical Association, New York City, May 5, 1915.

ways the causes of this reticence, not to say ignorance. While I received various answers, the chief one was to the effect that the alleged hypertrophy of sex in its gross pathological forms, and the conviction of the kind and degree of sex consciousness found in the many hundreds of analyzed cases, constitute the very essence of the neurotic and psychotic cases, but that conscious and unconscious sex factors are slight or absent in most normal cases; that these patients and their doctors alike are sex-intoxicated, and that the Freudian psychology applies only to perverts and erotomaniacs or other abnormal cases. To ascribe all this aversion on their part to social and ethical repression is both shallow and banousic, for the real causes are both manifold and deeper. They are part of a complicated protest of normality, found in all and even in the resistance of subjects of analysis, which is really a factor basal for self-control, of the varying good sides of which Freudians tell us nothing. The fact is that there are other things in the human psyche than sex and its ramifications. Hunger, despite Jung, fear despite Sadger, and anger despite Freud, are just as primary, aboriginal and independent as sex, and we fly in the face of fact and psychic experience to derive them all from sex, although it is freely granted that in morbid cases each may take on predominant sex features. I think a glance will show how the Freudian mechanisms apply quite as well to anger as to sex.

(1) Anger in most of its forms is the most dynamogenic of all the emotions. In paroxysms of rage with abandon we stop at nothing short of death and even mutilation of the corpse. The Malay running amuck, Orlando Furioso, the epic of the wrath of Achilles, hell-fire, which is an expression of divine wrath, are some illustrations of its power. Savages work themselves into frenzied rage in order to fight their enemies. In many descriptions of its brutal aspects, which I have collected, children and older human brutes spit, hiss, yell, snarl, bite noses and ears, scratch, gouge out eyes, pull hair, mutilate sex organs, with a violence that sometimes takes on epileptic features and which in a number of recorded cases causes sudden death at its acme, from the strain it imposes upon the system. Its cause is always some form of thwarting wish or will or of reduction of self-feeling, as anger is the acme of self-assertion. The German criminalist, Friedrich, says that probably every man might be caused to commit murder if provocation were sufficient, and that those of us who have never committed this crime owe it to circumstances and not to superior power of inhibition. Of course it may

be associated with sex but probably no human experience is *per se* more diametrically opposite to sex.

Some temperaments seem to crave, if not need, outbreaks of it at certain intervals, like a certain well-poised lady, so sweet-tempered that everybody imposed on her, till one day at the age of twenty-three she had her first ebullition of temper and went about to her college mates telling them plainly what she thought of them. She went home rested and happy, full of the peace that passeth understanding. Otto Heinze, and by implication Pfister, think nations that have too long or too assiduously cultivated peace must inevitably, sooner or later, relapse to the barbarisms of war to vent their instincts for combat, and Crile thinks anger most sthenic, while Cannon says it is the emotion into which most others tend to pass.

It has, of course, been a mighty agent in evolution, for those who can summate all their energies in attack have survived. But few if any impulsions of man, certainly not sex, have suffered more intense, prolonged or manifold repressions. Courts and law have taken vengeance into their hands or tried to, and not only a large proportion of assaults, but other crimes, are still due to explosions of temper, and it may be a factor in nearly every court case. Society frowns on it, and Lord Chesterfield says the one sure and unfailing mark of a gentleman is that he never shows temper. Its manifestations are severely tabooed in home and school. Religion teaches us not to let the sun go down upon our wrath and even to turn the other cheek, so that we go through life chronically afraid that we shall break out, let ourselves go, or get thoroughly mad, so that the moment we begin to feel a rising tide of indignation or resentment (in the nomenclature of which our language is so very rich, Chamberlain having collected scores of English expressions of it), the censorship begins to check it. In many cases in our returns repression is so potent from long practice, that the sweetest smile, the kindest remarks or even deeds are used either to veil it to others, or to evict it from our own consciousness, or else as a self-inflicted penance for feeling it, while in some tender consciences its checked but persistent vestiges may become centers of morbid complexes and in yet other cases it burrows and proliferates more or less unconsciously, and finds secret and circuitous ways of indulgence which only psychoanalysis or a moral or religious confessional could trace.

(2) Anger has many modes of *Verschiebung*, both instinctive and cultivated. One case in our returns carries a bit of wood in his vest pocket and bites it when he begins to

feel the aura of temper. Girls often play the piano loudly, and some think best of all. One plays a particular piece to divert anger, viz., the "Devil's Sonata." A man goes down cellar and saws wood, which he keeps for such occasions. A boy pounds a resonant eavespout. One throws a heavy stone against a white rock. Many go off by themselves and indulge in the luxury of expressions they want none to hear. Others take out their tantrum on the dog or cat or perhaps a younger child, or imprecate some absent enemy, while others curse. A few wound themselves, and so on, till it almost seems, in view of this long list of vicariates, as if almost any attack, psychic or physical, might thus be intensified, and almost anything or person be made the object of passion. Be it remembered, too, that not a few look, do, think, feel their best under this impulsion.

(3) Besides these modes of *Abreagierung* there are countless forms of sublimation. In anger a boy says: I will avenge myself on the bully who whipped me and whom I cannot or will not whip, by besting him in his studies, class-work, composition, or learn skillful stunts that he cannot do, dress, or behave better, use better language, keep better company, and thus find my triumph and revenge. A man rejected or scorned by a woman sometimes makes a great man of himself, with the motivation more or less developed to make her sorry or humiliated. Anger may prompt a man to go in to win his enemy's girl. A taunt or an insult sometimes spurs the victim of it to towering ambition to show the world and especially the abuser better, and to be able to despise him in return; and there are those who have been thus stung to attempt greatness and who find the sweetest joy of success in the feeling that by attaining it they compensate for indignities they suffered in youth.

In fact, when we analyze ambition and the horror of *Minderwertigkeit* that goes with it, we shall doubtless find this factor is never entirely absent, while if we were to apply the same pertinacity and subtlety that Jung in his "*Wandlungen*" has brought to bear in working over the treacherous material of mythology, we might prove with no less verisimilitude than he has shown the primacy of the libido that in the beginning was anger, and that not Anaxagoras' love or the strife of Heraclitus was the *fons et origo* of all things, that the *Ichtrieb* is basal, and that the fondest and most comprehensive of all motives is that to excel others, not merely to survive, but to win a larger place in the sun, and that there is some con-

nection between the Darwinian psychogenesis and Max Stirner and Nietzsche, which Adler has best evaluated.

(4) Anger has also its dreams and reveries. When wronged the imagination riots in the fancied humiliation and even tortures of an enemy. An object of hate may be put through almost every conceivable series of degradation, ridicule, exposure and disgrace. He is seen by others for what our hate deems him to be. All disguises are stripped off. Children sometimes fancy a hated object of anger flogged until he is raw, abandoned by all his friends, an outcast, homeless, alone, in the dark, starving, exposed to wild animals, and far more often more prosaic fancies conceive him as whipped by a parent or stronger friend, or by the victim himself later. Very clever strategies are thought out in detail by which the weaker gets even with or vanquishes the stronger, and one who suffers a rankling sense of injustice can hardly help day-dreaming of some form of come-uppance for his foe, although it takes years to do it. In these reveries the injurer in the end almost always gives up and sues for mercy at the feet of his quondam victim. So weird and dramatic are these scenes often that to some minds we must call anger and hate the chief springs of the imagination. A pubescent girl who was deeply offended went off by herself and held an imaginary funeral of her enemy, hearing in fancy the disparaging remarks of the bystanders, and when it was all over and the reaction came, she made up with the object of her passion by being unusually sweet to her and even became solicitous about her health as fearing that her revery might come true. We all too remember Tolstoi's reminiscences when, having been flogged by his tutor, he slunk off to the attic, weeping and broken-hearted, and finally after a long brooding resolved to run away and become a soldier, and this he did in fancy, becoming corporal, lieutenant, captain, colonel. Finally came a great battle where he led a desperate charge that was crowned with victory, and when all was over and he stood tottering, leaning on his sword, bloody and with many a wound, and the great Czar of all the Russias approached, saluted him as saviour of his fatherland and told him to ask whatever he wanted and it was his, he replied magnanimously that he had only done his duty and wanted no reward. All he asked was that his tutor might be brought up and his head cut off. Then the scene changed to other situations, each very different, florid with details, but motivated by ending in the discomfiture of the tutor. In the ebb or

ambivalent reaction of this passion he and the tutor got on better.

Richardson has collected 882 cases of mild anger, introspected by graduate students of psychology, and finds not only over-determination, anger fetishes and occasionally anger in dreams with patent and latent aspects and about all the Freudian mechanisms, but what is more important, finds that very much of the impulsion that makes us work and strive, attack and solve problems has an element of anger at its root. Life is a battle and for every real conquest man has had to summate and focus all his energies, so that anger is the acme of the manifestation of Schopenhauer's will to live, achieve and excel. Hiram Stanley rather absurdly described it as an epoch when primitive man first became angry and fought, overcoming the great quaternary carnivora and made himself the lord of creation. Plato said anger was the basis of the state, Ribot made it the establisher of justice in the world, and Bergson thinks society rests on anger at vice and crime, while Stekel thinks that temper qualities should henceforth be treated in every biography and explored in every case that is psychoanalyzed. Hill experimented with pugilism, and Cannon pleads for athletics as a legitimate surrogate for war in place of James' moral substitute. Frank Howard's opinion is that an impulse that Darwin finds as early as the sixth week and hardly any student of childhood later than the sixth month, should not be repressed but developed to its uttermost, although carefully directed to worthy objects, and he pleads for judicious scolding and flogging, to be done in heat and not in cold blood, and says that there is enough anger in the world, were it only rightly directed, to sweep away all the evils in it. In all these phenomena there is no trace of sex or any of its symbols, and sadism can never explain but must be explained by it.

In this very slight paper I am only trying to make the single point which I think fear and sympathy or the gregarious or social instinct would still better illustrate, although it would require more time, that the movement inaugurated by Freud opens up a far larger field than that of sex. The unconscious that introspectionists deny, asserting that all phenomena ascribed to it are only plain neural mechanisms, and therefore outside the realm of psychology, the feelings which introspection can confessedly never tell much about and concerning which our text-books in psychology still say so little, are marking a new epoch in this field, and in that the chief merit of Freudianism consists.